# Appendix B – Self-Assessment Form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and discussed at the landlord’s governing body annually. Evidence should be included to support all statements with additional commentary as necessary.

Explanations must also be provided where a mandatory ‘must’ requirement is not met to set out the rationale for the alternative approach adopted and why this delivers a better outcome.

## Section 1 - Definition of a complaint Mandatory ‘must’ requirements

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:****Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any****explanations** |
| **1.2** | A complaint must be defined as:‘*an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents*. | Yes | Definition used in Policy |
| **1.3** | The resident does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must still be handled in line with the landlord’s complaints policy. | Yes | All complaints dealt with as such. Matters not using the word complaint are also taken through the Complaints process where it meets the threshold of complaint |
| **1.6** | … if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter,or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint. | Yes  | Staff understand and training has been delivered to ensure they understand logging escalations and residents’ requests as a complaint |
| **1.7** | A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. | Yes | Specifics as to what is or is NOT a complaint specified within the Policy |
| **1.8** | A complaints policy must clearly set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered, and these circumstances should be fair and reasonableto residents. | Yes  | Exclusions are clearly referenced in the Policy  |

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| **1.9** | If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take thatdecision to the Ombudsman. | Yes | Where matter not accepted residents will be provided with Ombudsman details |

**Best practice ‘should’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **1.4** | Landlords should recognise the difference between a **service request**, where a resident may be unhappy with a **situation** that they wish to have rectified, and a **complaint** about the **service** they have/have notreceived. | Yes | Complaints policy clearly defines complaint |
| **1.5** | Survey feedback may not necessarily need to be treated as a complaint, though, where possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue their dissatisfaction as a complaintif they wish to. | Yes | Advice offered to staff who undertake surveys to advise customers as required |

**Section 2 - Accessibility and awareness Mandatory ‘must’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **2.1** | Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which residents can make a complaint such as in person, over the telephone, in writing, by email and digitally. While the Ombudsman recognises that it may not be feasible for a landlord to use all of the potential channels, there must be more than one route of access into the complaintssystem. | Yes | A complaint can be made using any of the contact methods provided by the Association  |

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| **2.3** | Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the number of stages involved, what will happen at each stage and the timeframes for responding. | Yes | Policy available on website and in office. Alterative formats available on request. |
| **2.4** | Landlord websites, if they exist, must include information on how to raise a complaint. The complaints policy and process must be easy to find on the website. | Yes | Available through the ‘Your Home’ tab at top of page with complaints on the drop-down menu |
| **2.5** | Landlords must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and may need to adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual’s needs.Landlords must satisfy themselves that their policy sets out how they will respond to reasonable adjustments requests in line with the Equality Act and that complaints handlers have had appropriate training todeal with such requests. | Yes | SBHA complies with the Equality Act 2010. Adapting policies, procedures/processes are undertaken regularly to meet the needs of our diverse customer base. The office is accessible, has ramp access and hearing induction loop. We provide translation on request and source speakers of other languages where this may not exist withing the staff team. |
| **2.6** | Landlords must publicise the complaints policy and process, the Complaint Handling Code and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme in leaflets, posters, newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence withresidents. | Yes | Policy, self-assessment and code on website. Customers are regularly made aware of process including articles/information in quarterly newsletter  |
| **2.7** | Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regularcorrespondence with residents. | Yes | First stage response letters amended to include Ombudsman details  |
| **2.8** | Landlords must provide early advice to residents regarding their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout their complaint, not only when the landlord’s complaints process is exhausted. | Yes | As above |

**Best practice ‘should’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:****Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **2.2** | Where a landlord has set up channels to communicate with its residents via social media, then it should expect to receive complaints via those channels. Policies should contain details of the steps that will be takenwhen a complaint is received via social media and how confidentiality and privacy will be maintained. | Yes | Referenced within Policy. |

**Section 3 - Complaint handling personnel Mandatory ‘must’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **3.1** | Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling to ensure complaints receive the necessary attention, and that these are reported to the governing body. This Code will refer to that person or team as the “complaintsofficer”. | Yes | Assistant Director of Operations takes lead responsibility. Board updated quarterly  |
| **3.2** | …the complaint handler appointed must haveappropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest. | Yes | Housing Ombudsman training on complaints attended. |

**Best practice ‘should’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **3.3** | Complaint handlers should:* be able to act sensitively and fairly
* be trained to handle complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents
* have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick
 | Yes | Assistant Director of Operations leads on complaints. Has authority to deliver on all requirements listed. |

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|  | resolution of complaints* have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.
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**Section 4 - Complaint handling principles Mandatory ‘must’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **4.1** | Any decision to try and resolve a concern must be taken in agreement with the resident and a landlord’s audit trail/records should be able to demonstrate this. Landlords must ensure that efforts to resolve a resident’s concerns do not obstruct access to the complaints procedure or result in any unreasonable delay. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as ‘stage 0’ or ‘pre-complaint stage’) as this causes unnecessary confusion for residents. When a complaint is made, it must be acknowledged and logged at stage one of the complaints procedure **within****five days of receipt**. | Yes | SBHA do not operate a ‘stage ‘0’ or any pre-complaint stage. |
| **4.2** | Within the complaint acknowledgement, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between bothparties. | Yes | Clarified at initial acknowledgment letter stage |
| **4.6** | A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner. | Yes | All complaints are dealt with and responded to on its merits |

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| **4.7** | The complaint handler must:* deal with complaints on their merits
* act independently and have an open mind
* take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
* consider all information and evidence carefully
* keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter.
 |  | As above, all complaints are dealt with and responded to on its merits |
| **4.11** | Landlords must adhere to any reasonablearrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication | Yes | Reasonable arrangements always taken into consideration. |
| **4.12** | The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:* set out their position
* comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.
 | Yes | Both stages of the process allow for all parties to set out their position and comment on any findings. |
| **4.13** | A landlord must include in its complaints policy itstimescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint | Yes | Timescales clearly highlighted in Policy |
| **4.14** | A landlord must not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure and must have clear and valid reasons for taking that course of action. Reasons for declining to escalate a complaint must be clearly set out in a landlord’s complaints policy and must be the same asthe reasons for not accepting a complaint. | Yes | SBHA has always allowed any stage 1 complaint to escalate to stage 2 if timescales have been adhered to. Flexibility in reasons why has allowed Board to be involved in the detail and follow-on decision making  |
| **4.15** | A full record must be kept of the complaint, any review and the outcomes at each stage. This must include theoriginal complaint and the date received, all | Yes | Specific file in place for complaints |

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|  | correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any reports or surveys prepared. |  |  |
| **4.18** | Landlords must have policies and procedures in placefor managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint. | Yes | Procedures in place and advertised for e.g., in Association office |

**Best practice ‘should’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **4.3** | Landlords should manage residents’ expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic | Yes | Residents asked what they expect from the complaint and conclusion they would like to see. Expectation management starts from this process and explanations offered both verbally and in writing as part of complaint |
| **4.4** | A complaint should be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity, having assessed what evidence is needed to fully consider the issues, what outcome wouldresolve the matter for the resident and whether there are any urgent actions required. | Yes | Complaints, complaint handling and investigations prioritised by staff member leading on this area  |
| **4.5** | Landlords should give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord where this is reasonable. | Yes | This is undertaken as standard and residents are offered the opportunity to have representative(s) deal with the complaint on their behalf and are encouraged to have someone accompany them to any meeting to discuss matters |
| **4.8** | Where a key issue of a complaint relates to the parties’ legal obligations landlords should clearly set out their understanding of the obligations of both parties. | Yes | Understanding of obligations always referenced and highlighted where legal matters are relevant.  |
| **4.9** | Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors. | Yes | Undertaken as standard practice |
| **4.10** | Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation. | Yes | Timescales clearly referenced within Policy |
| **4.16** | Landlords should seek feedback from residents in relation to the landlord’s complaint handling as part of the drive to encourage a positive complaint and | No | Complaint handling satisfaction survey currently being developed.  |

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|  | learning culture. |  |  |
| **4.17** | Landlords should recognise the impact that being complained about can have on future service delivery. Landlords should ensure that staff are supported andengaged in the complaints process, including the learning that can be gained | Yes | All complaints anonymised and feedback to wider team with the specific aim to learn lessons and improve service delivery |
| **4.19** | Any restrictions placed on a resident’s contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their needs and should demonstrate regard for theprovisions of the Equality Act 2010. | Yes | Any restrictions are always undertaken with advice from Association Solicitors who advise on all legal compliance including Equality Act 2010 |

**Section 5 - Complaint stages Mandatory ‘must’ requirements Stage 1**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:****Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.1** | Landlords must respond to the complaint **within 10 working days** of the complaint being logged. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This shouldnot exceed a further 10 days without good reason. | Yes | Timescales in place and clearly referenced  |
| **5.5** | A complaint response must be sent to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue, are completed.Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned expeditiously with regular updates provided to the resident. | Yes | Communication is central to all complaint responses and sent to resident within timescales set out in Policy. Actions are dealt with separately and tracked and responded to as advised to resident as part of the complaint response |
| **5.6** | Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. | Yes | All points of complaints always addressed as part of complaint and subsequent investigation. |
| **5.8** | Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language: | Yes | Included as part of response letter  |

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|  | * the complaint stage
* the decision on the complaint
* the reasons for any decisions made
* the details of any remedy offered to put things right
* details of any outstanding actions
* details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer
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**Stage 2**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:****Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.9** | If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident’s satisfaction at stage one it must be progressed to stage two of the landlord’s procedure, unless an exclusion ground now applies. In instances where a landlord declines to escalate a complaint it must clearly communicate in writing its reasons for not escalating as well as the resident’s right to approach the Ombudsman about its decision. | Yes | The Association allows escalation to Stage 2 if resident wants to escalate. Residents right to approach the Ombudsman is also highlighted at each stage of the process. |
| **5.10** | On receipt of the escalation request, landlords must set out their understanding of issues outstanding and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties. | Yes | At escalation stage residents are written to and understanding of issues highlighted. Any clarification that may be required is discussed at this stage |
| **5.11** | Landlords must only escalate a complaint to stage two once it has completed stage one and at the request of the resident. | Yes | Process highlighted within Policy and followed |
| **5.12** | The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one. | Yes | Stage 2 includes representatives of the Board and Director |

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| **5.13** | Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint **within 20 working days** of the complaint being escalated. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. | Yes | Adherence to timescale demonstrated in Policy |
| **5.16** | Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language:* the complaint stage
* the complaint definition
* the decision on the complaint
* the reasons for any decisions made
* the details of any remedy offered to put things right
* details of any outstanding actions

**and*** if the landlord has a third stage, details of how to escalate the matter to stage three
* if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied.
 | Yes | Included as part of response letter  |

**Stage 3**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.17** | Two stage landlord complaint procedures are ideal. This ensures that the complaint process is not unduly long. If landlords strongly believe a third stage is necessary, they must set out their reasons for this as part of their self-assessment. Aprocess with more than three stages is not acceptable under any circumstances. | N/A | 2 stage procedure used |
| **5.20** | Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language:* the complaint stage
 | N/A |  |

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|  | * the complaint definition
* the decision on the complaint
* the reasons for any decisions made
* the details of any remedy offered to put things right
* details of any outstanding actions
* details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied
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**Best practice ‘should’ requirements** **Stage 1**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.2** | If an extension beyond 20 working days is required to enable thelandlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties. | Yes | Any potential extension of time would be clearly demonstrated and explained to resident and approval sought  |
| **5.3** | Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman’s contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord’s plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord’s response. | Yes | Housing Ombudsman’s contact provided at all stages of the process  |
| **5.4** | Where the problem is a recurring issue, the landlord should consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident. | Yes | Resolution of complaints is at the forefront of how the Association operates. Any recurring issues is investigated and attempts always made to try to resolve any issues. |
| **5.7** | Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these should be incorporated into the stage one response if they are relevant and the stage one response has not been issued. Where the stage one response has beenissued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the complaint should be logged as a new complaint. | Yes | Identified process followed by the Association  |

**Stage 2**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.14** | If an extension beyond 10 working days is required to enable thelandlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties. | Yes | Agreement sought and all discussions formalised in writing and resident kept up-to-date  |
| **5.15** | Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman’s contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord’s plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord’sresponse | Yes | Housing Ombudsman’s contact provided at all stages of the process  |

**Stage 3**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **5.18** | Complaints should only go to a third stage if the resident has actively requested a third stage review of their complaint. Where a third stage is in place and has been requested, landlords must respond to the stage three complaint **within 20 working days** of the complaint being escalated. Additional time will only be justified if related to convening a panel. An explanation and a date for when the stage three response will be received shouldbe provided to the resident. | N/A |  |
| **5.19** | Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman’s contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord’s plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord’sresponse. | N/A |  |

**Section 6 - Putting things right Mandatory ‘must’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:****Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **6.1** | Effective dispute resolution requires a process designed to resolve complaints. Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it hasalready taken, or intends to take, to put things right. | Yes | Where service failing found an apology is always offered followed by actions to put things right and ensure the same mistakes are not made again |
| **6.2** | Any remedy offered must reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result. A landlord must carefully manage the expectations of residents and not promise anything that cannot be delivered orwould cause unfairness to other residents. | Yes | Expectation management is always considered as part of any remedy/resolution offered |
| **6.5** | The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion. | Yes | Any remedy is always clearly set out with timescales for delivery.  |
| **6.6** | In awarding compensation, a landlord must consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred, the time and trouble a resident has been put toas well as any distress and inconvenience caused. | Yes | Considered as part of both stage 1 and stage 2 of the process |

**Best practice ‘should’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:****Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **6.3** | Landlords should look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether anything needs to be‘put right’ in terms of process or systems to the benefit of all residents. | Yes | All complaints are taken back to wider staff team and any learning improvements discussed and systems/processes amended to reflect this |
| **6.7** | In some cases, a resident may have a legal entitlement to redress. The landlord should still offer a resolution where possible, obtaining legal advice as to how any offer of resolutionshould be worded. | Yes | Where required the Association obtains legal advice from the Association’s solicitors |

**Section 7 - Continuous learning and improvement**

**Mandatory ‘must’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:****Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **7.2** | Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints in their annual report and more frequently to their residents, staff and scrutinypanels. | Yes | Complaints reported in annual report. From 2022 a specific complaints report to be initiated and disseminated widely to customers |

**Best practice ‘should’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply:****Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **7.3** | A member of the governing body should be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord’scomplaint handling performance. | No | Complaints ‘champion’ to be considered by Board  |
| **7.4** | As a minimum, governing bodies should receive:* Regular updates on the volume, categories and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman’s orders
* Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling,
* The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable
* Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including where the Ombudsman made findings of severe maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies. The implementation of management responses should be tracked to ensure they are delivered to agreed timescales. The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling

Code for scrutiny and challenge. | Yes | Board receives quarterly report on complaints. From 2022 the Association has agreed to develop a standalone annual complaints report  |

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| **7.5** | Any themes or trends should be assessed by senior management to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. They should also be used to inform staff and contractor training. | Yes | Complaints led on by Assistant Director of Operations and themes, trends etc are identified and acted upon |
| **7.6** | Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to:* have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments
* take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints rather than blaming others
* act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing.
 | Yes | Complaints handling taken seriously by the Association. Staff are trained on complaints locally by senior staff and culture of effectively and positively responding to complaints encouraged.  |

**Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance** **Mandatory ‘must’ requirements**

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| **Code section** | **Code requirement** | **Comply: Yes/No** | **Evidence, commentary and any explanations** |
| **8.1** | Landlords must carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with itsrequirements. | Yes | Annual self-assessment undertaken in September each year as part of complaints review  |
| **8.2** | Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures. | Yes | Code updated in line with update of Complaints Policy  |
| **8.3** | Following each self-assessment, a landlord must:* report the outcome of their self-assessment to their governing body. In the case of local authorities, self- assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members
* publish the outcome of their assessment on their website if they have one, or otherwise make accessible to residents
* include the self-assessment in their annual report section on complaints handling performance
 | Yes | Self-Assessment included in July 2022 Board papers. Self-Assessment will be uploaded onto website following approval of Policy. Self-Assessment will also be included in annual report |